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# Byzantium through Armenian Eyes: Cultural Appropriation and the Church of Zuart'noc<sup>6</sup>\*

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## Abstract

*The seventh-century church of Zuart'noc' in Armenia is the earliest and largest aisled tetraconch in the medieval Caucasus. While previous scholarship has described the monument as a product of Byzantine influence, here Zuart'noc' is examined from the point of view of the patron, Nersēs III (640–661). This article argues that the construction was intended to convey a specific political message: to demonstrate the patron's alliance with the Byzantine political and cultural world. Through choices made in the iconography of the sculptural program, in epigraphic language and devices, in architectural planning, and perhaps even in the selection of the dedication, the church presents a network of references to the Byzantine imperium. As such, it is revealing of Armenian perceptions of Byzantium, standing as a witness to seventh-century diplomatic ties in a time of acute military tension on the eastern frontier.*

Zuart'noc',<sup>1</sup> one of the best known medieval monuments of the Caucasus, lies on the Armenian plateau, only two miles west of the town of Ējmiacin, site of the conversion of Armenia to Christianity and spiritual center of the land. In the seventh century, when Zuart'noc' was built, it must have risen up like a mirage: the large, high-walled complex stood within a cultivated oasis of orchards, vineyards, and fields in the midst of a dry plain.<sup>2</sup> Today a sprawl of ruins offers only a hint of the church's former state (Fig. 1): thick columns, fragments of sculpture, and massive curved chunks of masonry that once composed a domed, tetraconchal church now lie prone on a stepped, polygonal platform. The sculptural remains reveal that the church's exterior surface was once embellished with blind arcades and carvings of lush grapevines, pomegranates, and figural ornament (Fig. 2). Adjoining the church was the palatine complex of the catholicos, or patriarch, Nersēs III. The palace buildings, with their colonnaded porches and barrel-vaulted chambers, were sheathed, like the church itself, with squared and polished stones of basalt quarried in the region.

Zuart'noc' is rightly assigned an important place in the history of medieval art in the Christian East. The church is the largest aisled tetraconch known in the Caucasus, and it lies within the most extensive palace (either patriarchal or episcopal) yet discovered in Armenia. Further, as the residence of the seventh-century catholicate, it figures in several medieval Armenian sources,<sup>3</sup> as does its patron Nersēs, known

as "The Builder," or *Šinoł*, on account of his many architectural commissions.<sup>4</sup> Finally, Zuart'noc' was closely associated with the patron saint of Armenia, Gregory the Illuminator (Grigor Lusaworič'), both in its dedication to the "heavenly host of angels" that Gregory beheld in a vision and through its location close to the town of Ējmiacin, where Gregory converted the pagan king Trdat and, in 314, established Christianity as Armenia's official religion.

## The State of the Question

Since its discovery and preliminary excavation at the turn of the twentieth century, Zuart'noc' has attracted the attention of scholars working from both eastern and western perspectives. The majority of early publications were devoted to providing archaeological reports<sup>5</sup> and hypothetical reconstructions of the building.<sup>6</sup> Problems relating to the origins of the aisled tetraconch type were also widely discussed in the literature and remain to this day the most common avenue of inquiry.<sup>7</sup>

The most important study of Zuart'noc's architectural sources is that by W. Eugene Kleinbauer, who traced the building's origins to the aisled tetraconchs of Asia Minor. Demonstrating correspondences in both form and function, Kleinbauer showed that the monument belongs to a family of buildings constructed in Syria and northern Mesopotamia. He suggested further that the similarities were due to "close relations between the Syrian and Armenian church."<sup>8</sup> But Kleinbauer also made the observation that the Syrian and Mesopotamian tetraconchs were all founded by clergy adhering to Orthodox, rather than Syriac, Christianity.<sup>9</sup> The parallels might thus be construed as an indication of Nersēs' Byzantine leanings, also attested in contemporary Armenian sources. In the chronicle of Sebēos, the catholicos is reported to have harbored sympathies for the Orthodox Christianity of the Byzantines, sympathies initially kept secret from his Armenian compatriots. This has led certain scholars to view Zuart'noc' as a statement of alliance with the Byzantine empire and others to interpret the sculptural program, with its Ionic capitals and Greek monograms, as an expression of the patron's Hellenophilia.<sup>10</sup>

The Byzantinizing character of Zuart'noc', however, has been discussed only in the most general terms, and no effort has been made to understand the specific nature of the formal appropriations or their implications. In part, this is symptomatic

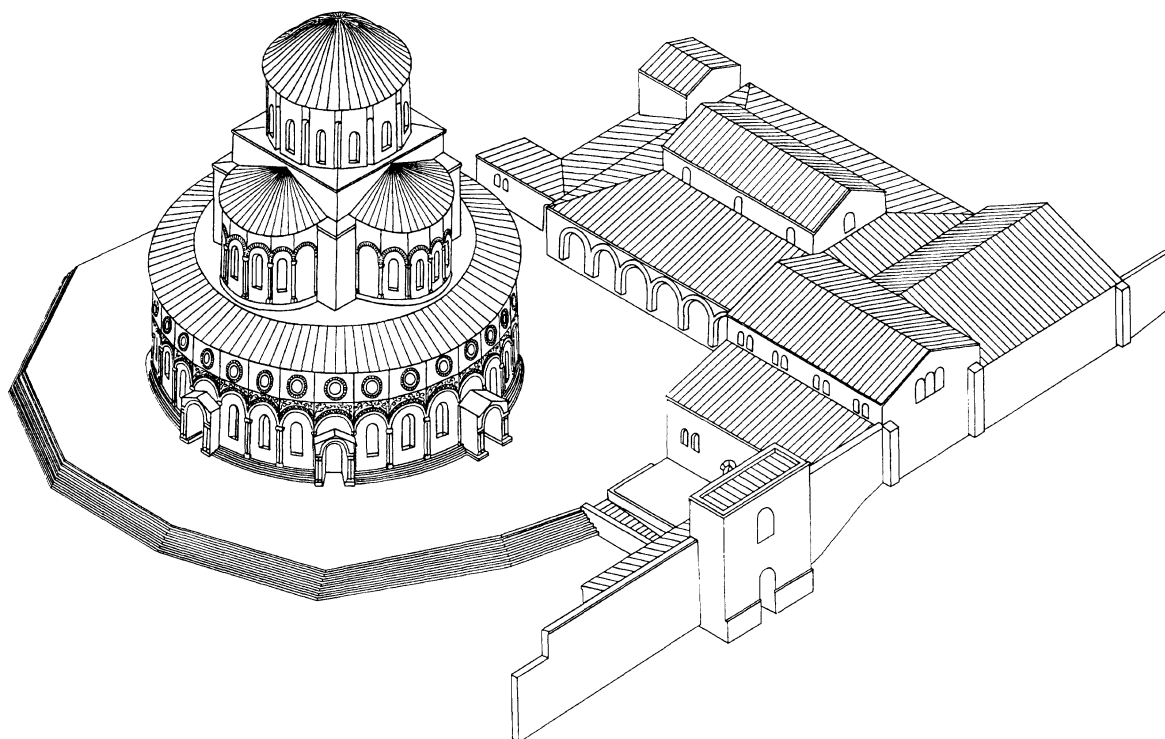


FIGURE 1. Zuart'noc', reconstruction of the seventh-century church and palace (after Mnac'ankanyan, Zuart'noc', 1971, Fig. 17).

of a long-standing historiographical problem in the Byzantine field: art of the imperial center is presumed naturally to assert its influence in border regions.<sup>11</sup> This model has been challenged in recent revisionist scholarship dealing with other cross-cultural traditions.<sup>12</sup> But only a very few scholars treating art of the Caucasus have begun to rethink the issue.<sup>13</sup>

The present study seeks to understand the appropriation of non-Armenian forms at Zuart'noc' as an active rather than a passive phenomenon. As such, it will raise the following questions: if there are Byzantine features at Zuart'noc', what are they, and how and why were the motifs chosen? What was their meaning in an Armenian context? Who was intended to view them and what was the desired response? These questions speak to the much more complex problem of seventh-century Armenian perceptions of Byzantium, a problem this article will seek to address.

Because of Armenia's geographical situation at the border between the Persian and Byzantine empires (Fig. 3), issues of appropriation and reception are particularly interesting. With its links to Iranian as well as to Hellenic traditions, practicing a distinct form of Christianity and possessing its own language and literature, Armenia developed a highly specific vision of Byzantium at one of the most tumultuous eras in early medieval history: the period in which Arab invasions swiftly and decisively laid waste to much of the eastern empire. One goal of this investigation into Armenian patronage will be to throw light on Byzantium's diplomatic relations on the eastern frontier at a time when Byzantine sources fall virtually silent.

### *The Historical Context*

The principal source for seventh-century Armenian-Byzantine relations is the *History of Heraclius* attributed to the Armenian bishop Sebēos. Drawing upon Persian, Byzantine, and Armenian sources, as well as what appear to be eyewitness accounts, Sebēos describes the Byzantine-Persian wars fought from the reign of Maurice (582–602) to the accession of Muawiya as caliph (591–661).<sup>14</sup> His loyalty is toward the Armenian church, and he is primarily concerned with religious issues and the affairs of the *naxarars* (lords) of Armenia. But he makes frequent reference to the military and political events of the period and specifically to relations between the Byzantine military and Armenians, Persians, and Jews. Although there are questions surrounding the authorship and precise date of Sebēos' *History*, few doubt that it was composed in the seventh century.<sup>15</sup> We may thus gather from the text and use with some caution the information that is offered, particularly in the final section, which deals with contemporary events.

Zuart'noc', as Sebēos attests, was constructed during the Byzantine military occupation of Armenia, at the time when Arab raids throughout Asia Minor were threatening the borders of the eastern empire.<sup>16</sup> Because of its geographical situation, Armenia was especially vulnerable and became the target of several attacks in the seventh century. Byzantines and Armenians alike had a vital stake in the outcome of the conflicts. The emperor was intent upon protecting the borders of his empire, expanding the religious interests of Byzantium,

and supporting his army. Armenians, seeing themselves as potential victims of both Arab and Byzantine aggression, were chiefly concerned about the security of their territory.

By 640 Arab forces had conquered Sassanian Mesopotamia and had invaded Armenia from the south, staging a particularly ferocious attack on the Armenian town of Duin, which resulted in the massacre of the entire population.<sup>17</sup> From 643/44 to 656, Arab offensives intensified into a full-scale invasion of the Transcaucasus. At this time, local Armenian armies under Byzantine command were reinforced with imperial troops and placed under the direction of T'ēodoros Rštuni, an Armenian prince named by emperor Constans II (641–668) as the local general of the Byzantine field army.<sup>18</sup> However, Rštuni's Byzantine allegiance proved to be short-lived. In 652/53, without the consent of the other Armenian princes, he switched sides and agreed to an attractive offer of alliance with the Arabs, according to which Armenia became a protectorate of the caliphate in exchange for recognizing Arab suzerainty.<sup>19</sup> Rštuni's defection was not long kept secret. Learning the news, Constans reacted swiftly, sending Byzantine troops into Armenia and traveling there himself in the summer of 653. He came accompanied by an army of some 20,000 Byzantine soldiers.<sup>20</sup> Imperial forces won several victories at the eastern frontier in the late 650s, benefiting from the Arabs' concurrent civil war.<sup>21</sup> In 659/60, Constans sought to consolidate Byzantine authority in Transcaucasia and made a second visit to Armenia. During this time, he presented local rulers with insignia of office, presents, titles, and land.<sup>22</sup> The imperial presence in the area, however, diminished in 662 with the end of the civil war, at which time Arabs once again assumed dominance in Asia Minor. Armenia remained under Arab control until the ninth century.

Nersēs' election as catholicos coincided with the 640 massacre at Duin, during which his predecessor, Ēzr, was killed.<sup>23</sup> The position was politically crucial, for, in the absence of a king or central official in Armenian society, the catholicos played a major role not only in doctrinal affairs but also in policy-making. Nersēs' leanings, like those of Ēzr, seem to have been pro-Byzantine. Sebēos tells us that he originated in the village of Iṣḫan in Tayk', located at the north-western corner of Armenia, close to the Georgian border. Since Tayk' lay in the Byzantine-controlled sector of Armenia, an area which was most likely Orthodox in inclination, Nersēs may have come into contact with Orthodox Christianity early in his life. We are also informed that "he had studied [Greek] language and literature . . . and traveled through those lands with the army in a military capacity."<sup>24</sup> It was presumably in this context that Nersēs developed his pro-Byzantine religious sympathies.

According to Sebēos, Nersēs concealed his position until the time of Constans' first visit to Armenia in 653, when the emperor took communion at Duin:

[Nersēs] planned to convert Armenia to the council of Chalcedon. Yet he did not dare to reveal his intention until



FIGURE 2. Zuart'noc', reconstruction of exterior elevation (photo: Mnac'an-kanyan, Zuart'noc', 1971, Fig. 20).

king Constans came and stayed in the residence of the Catholicos, and the council of Chalcedon was proclaimed in the church of St. Gregory on Sunday. The liturgy was celebrated in Greek by a Roman priest; and the king, Catholicos, and all the bishops took communion, some willingly, some unwillingly. In this way the Catholicos perverted the true faith of St. Gregory which all Catholicos had preserved on a solid foundation in the holy church from St. Gregory down to today.<sup>25</sup>

The "true faith of St. Gregory" recognized only the first three ecumenical councils. Armenians condemned the doctrine of Monophysitism, choosing to adhere to the earlier Christological definition of Cyril of Alexandria: "One is the nature of the Incarnate Logos."<sup>26</sup> But they also rejected Orthodox doctrine, which professed the separation of the human and divine natures of Christ, as proclaimed at Chalcedon in 451 by the fourth ecumenical council. At Duin in 653, however, it seems that Nersēs hoped to convert the Armenian clergy to Orthodoxy by forced communion.

Following the celebration of the rite, an embarrassing incident occurred in the presence of Constans: one bishop,



FIGURE 3. Map of Armenia and neighboring lands (after Der Nersessian, *The Armenians*, 1970, Fig. 1).

angry at the mandatory submission, declared that Nersēs had once adhered to Armenian Christianity and produced a document to this effect.<sup>27</sup> The emperor, according to Sebēos, reprimanded Nersēs in Greek and then departed for Constantinople. Nersēs soon thereafter fled to Tayk', "for the prince of Rštunik and the other princes with him had swollen up against him in tremendous anger."<sup>28</sup> The Armenian clergy would surely have held a similar attitude. Sometime in 654, for reasons unknown, Nersēs left Tayk' for a visit to the imperial capital, where he was received by Constans.<sup>29</sup>

Constans' close ties with Nersēs and his two Armenian trips were the product not only of his need to consolidate Byzantine power along the eastern frontier but also of his desire to convert Armenia to Orthodox Chalcedonian Christianity.<sup>30</sup> Pressure to abandon Armenian Christianity had begun to be exerted in the sixth century with the establishment of a Byzantine "anti-catholics" in Armenia, and it continued thereafter. The catholicos Ēzr (d. 640), for example, was informed that if he did not take the sacrament with emperor Heraclius (610–641), he would simply be replaced by someone who would. Ēzr complied.<sup>31</sup> In 647, during Nersēs' catholicate, Constans attempted to place Armenia under the patriarchate of Constantinople, writing an edict, together with the Byzantine patriarch, commanding that the Armenians embrace Byzantine Orthodoxy.<sup>32</sup> The Armenian bishops refused to obey and convened at Duin to write a response in defense of their faith.<sup>33</sup>

The emperor likely felt obliged to act, for Christological issues were kindling discontent among the Orthodox Byzan-

tine troops serving in the East. Several passages in Sebēos describe complaints to the emperor by the army about the religious infidelity of the Armenians.<sup>34</sup> In one case Constans responded by threatening to permit area troops to raid Armenian territory. This produced swift results, according to Sebēos, for the Armenians "fell on their faces, and with great supplication and tearful entreaties requested mercy, lest on account of their trespasses [Constans] be totally angered and ruin the country."<sup>35</sup> Most of the Armenians were then forced to "submit," that is, to aid in the military efforts of the Byzantines against the Arabs. Those who did not paid the consequences.<sup>36</sup>

Keeping the troops happy was vitally important, for this unit was one of the largest in the empire. As Robert W. Thomson has noted, Armenian forces were reinforced in the 640s and early 650s by a substantial Byzantine field army and were guided not only by designated locals such as Rštuni but also by high-ranking generals from the capital.<sup>37</sup> Walter Kaegi observes that Byzantine soldiers along the eastern frontier were the "main incubator of domestic military dissatisfaction and violence during the seventh century."<sup>38</sup> Mutiny occurred throughout the sixth and seventh centuries in the East, triggered by such factors as lack of pay, hostility toward the commanding general or the emperor, and losses to the enemy.<sup>39</sup> The wishes of the Byzantine army would thus have been a strong factor in Constans' interest in the religious affiliations of Armenia. It was in this political context that the Armenian catholicos Nersēs commissioned the Byzantinizing church at Quart'noc'.

The precise dates of the construction of Zuart'noc' are unknown. *Termini*, however, are provided by the years of Nersēs' catholicate, generally dated between 640 and 661.<sup>40</sup> In view of Nersēs' more secure circumstances prior to his exile, and assuming the fresh ambitions of a newly elected catholicos, it seems likely that much of the church was erected toward the beginning of this period. A foundation date in the mid-640s is confirmed by a reading of Sebēos, for initial construction is mentioned in a chapter describing events of 644. The text referring to this first campaign provides a detailed account of Nersēs' project, including the building of the palace, church, and walls, and the cultivation and irrigation of surrounding land:

At that time Nersēs the Catholicos of Armenia decided to build his residence near to the holy churches in the city of Vařarshapat, on the road on which—they say—king Trdat had met St. Gregory. There he built a church in the name of the Heavenly Angels, who had appeared as a multitude of heavenly hosts in the vision of St. Gregory. He built the church as a tall edifice, incomparably wonderful, worthy of the divine honour to which he dedicated it. He brought water, directed [a channel] of the river, and put to cultivation all the rough ground. He planted vines and trees, and surrounded his residence with a high wall, beautifully constructed, to the glory of God.<sup>41</sup>

Work was interrupted in the early 650s owing to increased Arab offensives as well as to Nersēs' self-imposed exile in Tayk' and his journey to Constantinople. It was resumed only two or three years before his death and probably coincided with Constans' second visit to Armenia.<sup>42</sup> Resumption of work is described quite cursorily: "[Nersēs] hastened to complete the construction of the church which he had built on the road to the city of Vařarřapat'."<sup>43</sup>

Nersēs' new foundation transferred the patriarchal palace and cathedral from Duin, some twenty kilometers northwest, to the plain of Ėjmiacin. The reasons for this bold move are not recorded, although some may have been practical: it is probable that the old catholicate at Duin had suffered serious damage in the Arab invasion of 640.<sup>44</sup> Nersēs' building program at Zuart'noc', however, must be viewed as a direct response to contemporary crises. Through his choices in the architectural plan, in the iconography of the sculptural program, and perhaps in the dedication, Nersēs created a monument that demonstrated his alliance with his powerful Greek-speaking neighbors. Before considering the political dimensions of Nersēs' commission, however, a closer inspection of the church's structure is required.

Like many medieval buildings of the Caucasus, Zuart'noc' was domed and centrally planned (Fig. 4). Four large, W-shaped piers served simultaneously to support the dome and

to divide the interior space into an inner and an outer shell. Between the piers, on the north, south, and west, were columnar exedrae, while the eastern apse was solid. An ambo stood southeast of the apse, which archaeological and textual evidence suggests was fitted with a synthronon.<sup>45</sup> Enveloping the church's inner core was a circular ambulatory from which protruded a large chamber, of uncertain function, at the eastern end.<sup>46</sup>

The church was richly decorated. A portion of its interior elevation was embellished with mosaics, as two fragments discovered during the initial excavations confirm: a fragment that survived until at least 1918 showed the upper part of a cross with diagonal rays emanating from its center.<sup>47</sup> In the spandrels of the exedrae were small sculpted busts of single figures holding what appear to be masons' tools: because of their instruments, the figures are usually identified as architects or builders of the complex.<sup>48</sup> Resting on the columns of the exedrae were large basket capitals with Ionic volutes featuring the monogram of the patron in Greek (Figs. 5, 8), and colonnettes attached to the main piers carried massive sculpted eagles with outstretched wings (Fig. 13). On the exterior of the building, large arcades marked out the lowest level of the elevation, while rich reliefs of pomegranate and grapevine motifs filled the spandrels. Above the arcades there was a row of oculi which was surmounted, in turn, by a cornice decorated with a basketweave design (Fig. 2).

Some scholars have stressed that Zuart'noc', in many ways, is consistent with the corpus of medieval buildings in the Caucasus.<sup>49</sup> Not only does the church share the domed, centrally-planned form preferred in the region, but it also employs the common building technique, in which two smooth stone surfaces provide the facing for a core of rubble and mortar. The use of stone vaulting rather than timber roofing also places it within the conventions of Armenian building. Finally, the copious exterior relief sculpture, not characteristic of Byzantine buildings, is standard in medieval Armenia and Georgia.<sup>50</sup>

And yet it must be acknowledged that, in most ways, Zuart'noc' is a *unicum* in the Caucasus. When we compare it to the church of Hřip'simē, for example, built two miles away in Ėjmiacin, some thirty years earlier, significant disparities emerge (Fig. 6).<sup>51</sup> Hřip'simē is also tetraconchal and centrally planned, but in the interior, as is often the case in medieval Armenian churches, the dome rests on the walls of the central bay rather than on free-standing members.<sup>52</sup> This produces the effect of a single, unified area rather than a series of spatial shells as at Zuart'noc'. On the exterior, the church has the appearance of a massive rectangle, and the sculptural ornament, quite elaborate at Zuart'noc', is sparse and tectonic, consisting only of pairs of tall, triangular niches along each façade.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to its complex layout and decoration, Zuart'noc' exhibits a feature otherwise unknown in Armenia at this time: columnar exedrae (Fig. 5).<sup>54</sup> Columns themselves are not common in Armenian church architecture, and the form

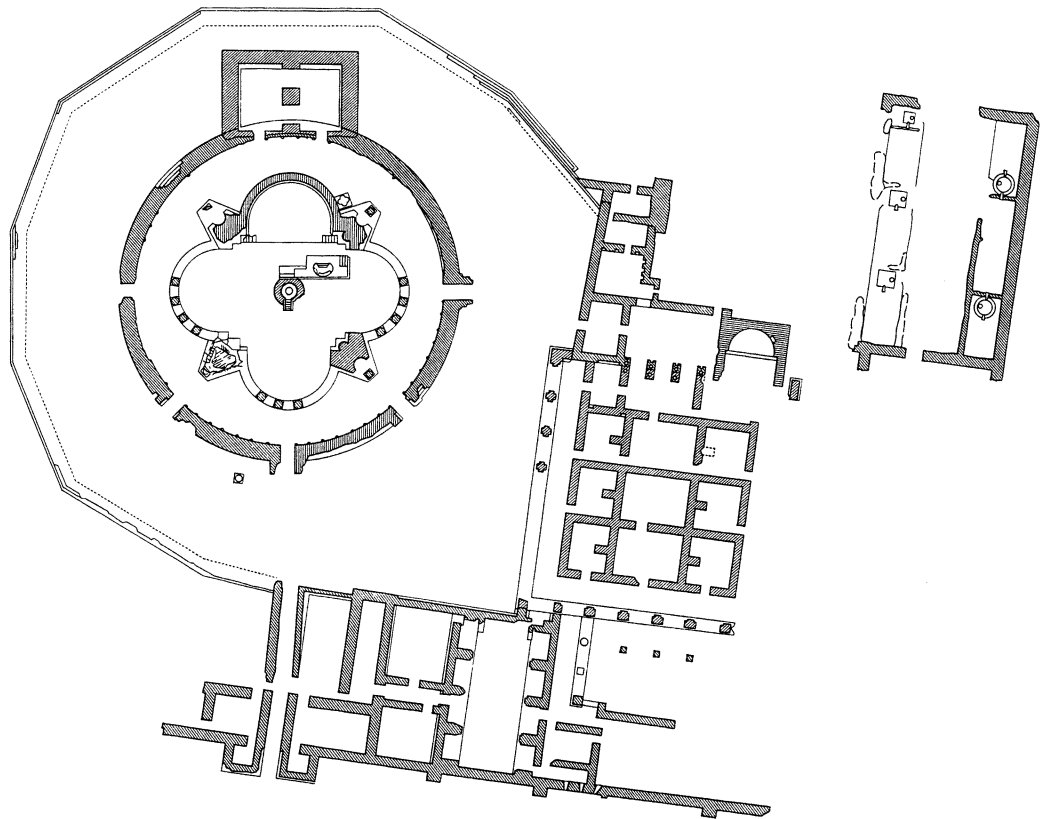


FIGURE 4. *Zuart'noc*, plan (after Mnac'ankanyan, *Zuart'noc*, 1971, Fig. 1).



FIGURE 5. *Zuart'noc*, columnar exedrae with Ionic capitals (photo: author).

of the Ionic capitals, strikingly close to Byzantine examples, is distinctive. Excavations at Duin, for example, turned up Ionic capitals whose volutes were reduced to a single hatched band wrapped around a circular motif (Fig. 7).<sup>55</sup> Those at Zuart'noc', by contrast, employ classic spiral volutes: each band of the spiral is concave, creating a sculpted, three-dimensional effect (Fig. 8). More detailed than most Armenian examples, they include a braided bolster encircling the volutes. The abacus is carefully stepped, and it features, between the two spirals, a denticulated form not present in other Armenian examples.

Even more indicative of the isolation of the Zuart'noc' capitals in an Armenian context are the medallions set between the volutes, six of which contain Nersēs' monogram in Greek.<sup>56</sup> The use of the monogram in formal epigraphy is anything but common in Armenia.<sup>57</sup> Equally unusual is the use of Greek, which is also employed in the brief donor inscription that once appeared above the main portal.<sup>58</sup> To the contemporary viewer, this must have seemed a calculated archaism. Until the fifth century, Armenian served only as a spoken language; Greek and Syriac were used in the liturgy, and inscriptions were normally in Greek.<sup>59</sup> Around 406, in response to religious and political forces, the Armenian alphabet was invented, generating a flood of translations from Greek and Syriac texts.<sup>60</sup> Inscriptions began to be executed in Armenian in the late sixth century, and by the 640s Armenian was the standard epigraphic language.<sup>61</sup> The church of Zuart'noc', employing Greek, announced itself as exceptional.

Taken as a whole, Zuart'noc' can be construed as a powerful and marked statement on Nersēs' part. The architectural design, with its curving, columnar exedrae and double-shell plan, and also the presence of an ambo, synthronon, and mosaic decoration are distinctive within their local context. The use of Greek in the inscription and, more particularly, on the monogrammed Ionic capitals carried a specific charge, worth investigating more closely.

### *The Significance of the Ambulatory Capitals*

The monograms on the capitals in the columnar exedrae at Zuart'noc' are of two different types. One type, represented by a single surviving example, is a cross monogram composed of the letters of the name *Narsou* ("of Narses"). The other, four of which are extant, reads *Katholikon* ("of the Catholicos") (Fig. 9). In each case the monogram is carved on one side of the Ionic capital, while a medallion containing a cross appears on the other. Although other aspects of the reconstruction of the church are in dispute, most scholars assume that the Ionic capitals were positioned so that the monogrammed side faced the ambulatory, as they stand today.

Monogrammed capitals, otherwise unknown in Armenia, are common in Byzantium.<sup>62</sup> The largest number survives in Constantinople, and best known are the sixth-century monogrammed capitals of Justinian and Theodora in the churches of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus and Hagia Sophia. In the former, two impost capitals carved with finely-drilled vegetal motifs

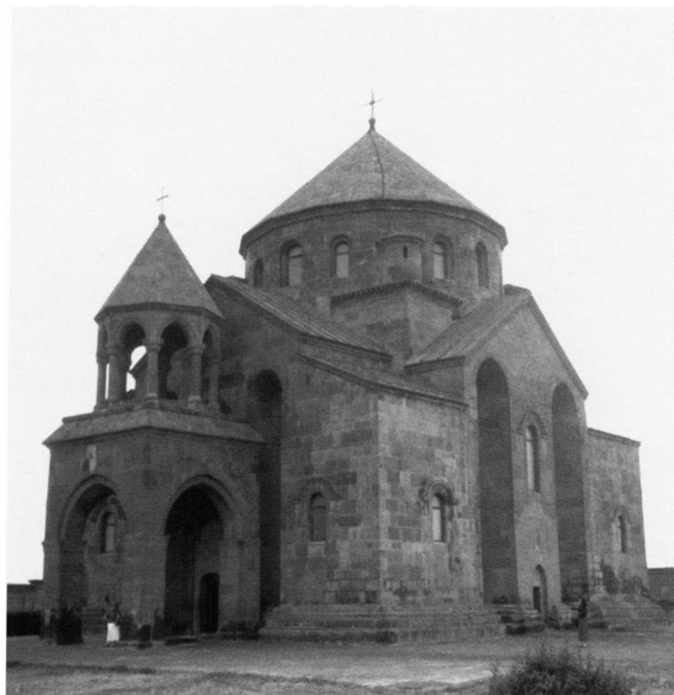


FIGURE 6. *Hrip'simē*, view from southwest (photo: author).

crown columns flanking the portal in the south ambulatory that gave access to the adjacent church of Sts. Peter and Paul.<sup>63</sup> At the center of the capitals are monograms of the emperor and empress, enclosed within medallions.<sup>64</sup> In Hagia Sophia, monogrammed capitals occur throughout the building.<sup>65</sup> Closest to those at Zuart'noc' are the delicately carved Ionic capitals in the galleries (Fig. 10). The monograms of Justinian and Theodora, again contained within medallions, are placed in the circular swelling between and slightly below the two small volutes.<sup>66</sup>

Parallels to the Ionic basket style of the Zuart'noc' capitals are discovered in Italy, the Balkans,<sup>67</sup> along the western coastlands of Turkey,<sup>68</sup> and at various sites in the Christian East. Particularly close matches are found in Syria, Mesopotamia, and the Holy Land. In the sixth-century church of the Virgin in Mayafarkin in Mesopotamia,<sup>69</sup> cushion capitals appear atop columns that separate the central core of the structure from the outer shell. Although not capped with Ionic volutes, they are ornamented with the same flat, braided basket motif seen at Zuart'noc' (Fig. 11).<sup>70</sup> It is, however, a capital from Syrian Apamea, probably dating to the sixth century, that provides the closest analogy (Fig. 12). Although greatly weathered, the body of the capital was clearly decorated with a basketweave pattern, and it was topped with Ionic volutes of the same design and proportion as those at Zuart'noc'.<sup>71</sup>

The parallels suggest that the capitals at Zuart'noc', like other features of the program, derive in part from Syrio-Mesopotamian sources. And yet the significance of the formal



FIGURE 7. *Duin, Ionic capital (photo: D'Onofrio, Le chiese di Dvin, 1973, Fig. 89).*



FIGURE 8. *Zuart'noc', Ionic capital with monogram of Nerses (photo: author).*



FIGURE 10. *Istanbul, Hagia Sophia, north aisle, capital with monogram of Justinian (photo: Schneider, Die Hagia Sophia zu Konstantinopel, 1939, Fig. 45).*



FIGURE 9. *Zuart'noc', monograms of Nerses on Ionic capitals (photo: courtesy of Toramanyan Archives, Erevan).*

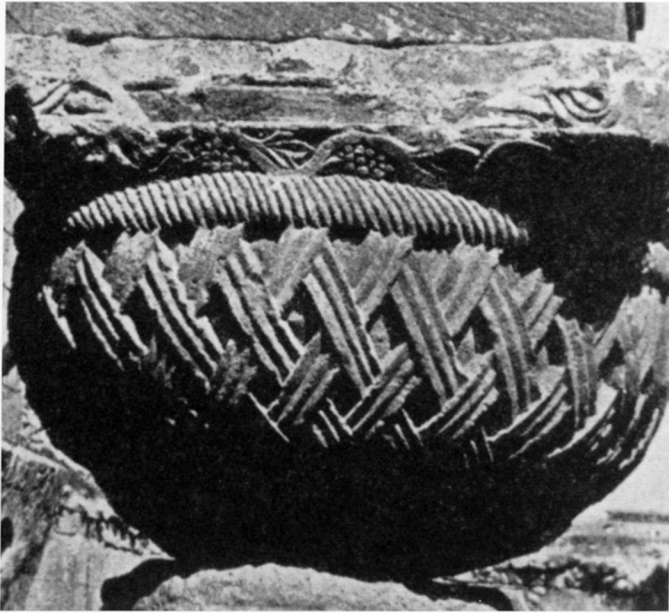


FIGURE 11. *Mayafarkin, Mesopotamia, Church of the Virgin, basket capital* (photo: Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*, 1918, Fig. 790).

analogies is difficult to pin down. Certainly, cultural interrelations between the two regions were many,<sup>72</sup> but there is no evidence of a specific religious or political alliance in Nersēs' day. Sebēos, who discusses the religious position of the catholicos at some length, emphasizes rather his sympathies with Byzantium. Hence, while the comparison between the Armenian and Syrio-Mesopotamian capitals is suggestive, it is, perhaps, more important to lay stress on the broadly Greek rather than the specifically Syrio-Mesopotamian character of the Zuart'noc' capitals. The use of Greek monograms and the classicizing Ionic order, which derives ultimately from sixth-century developments in Constantinople, is best interpreted as a general referent to the contemporary Byzantine realm.

In employing such capitals, Nersēs indicated his knowledge of and leanings toward Byzantium. Using both a language no longer current in Armenia and an unfamiliar graphic device, he presented himself as sympathetic to Greek culture. Given the volatility of the Byzantine army, and Constans' efforts to make the Armenians embrace Orthodoxy, this was particularly astute: walking around the ambulatory, a Byzantine visitor could not miss the message, which repeatedly and insistently declared Nersēs best suited for the job: *Nersēs, Catholicos, Nersēs, Catholicos*.

Even more striking than the Ionic capitals with cross monograms are the magnificent eagle capitals at Zuart'noc', all four of which survive (Figs. 13, 14). These capitals, which must also have carried a political charge, rested on single columns standing before the four main piers. In each case, a lone eagle, gazing steadily outward toward the ambulatory, wraps



FIGURE 12. *Apamea, Syria, basket capital with Ionic volutes* (photo: Canivet, "Sites chrétiens d'Apamène," *Archeologia*, 1971, Fig. 12).

massive outstretched wings around the capital's three visible sides.<sup>73</sup> There are no direct parallels in seventh-century sculpture in Byzantium or in the Caucasus,<sup>74</sup> but related types do occur. Closest, perhaps, is a particular form of capital in which eagles are perched on the corners of the abacus. This type was popular throughout Byzantium and the West, especially in Constantinople.<sup>75</sup> An example in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum, dating from the late fourth or early fifth century, shows four eagles with spread wings gripping the capital's four corners (Fig. 15).<sup>76</sup>

As symbols of imperial authority, eagles appeared in many contexts in official Byzantine art.<sup>77</sup> Military standards and shields were often decorated with eagles—a tradition continued from Roman times<sup>78</sup>—and the symbol could also be seen on the fortifications of Constantinople, including the Golden Gate. Interestingly analogous to the eagles at Zuart'noc' are those represented on the famous sixth-century ivory of the empress Ariadne now in Florence (Fig. 16).<sup>79</sup> Perched atop the imperial niche, holding garlands in their beaks, the eagles turn toward each other. The eagles at Zuart'noc' also turn sideways to confront one another. Hence, if we imagine a figure standing at the center of an exedra, the capitals would have created a framing effect that would have communicated a similar sense of imperial authority and sanction. At Zuart'noc', however, the message would have been conveyed not by a static image, as in the Byzantine object, but rather through a subtle interplay between sculpture and real-life ritual.

Lead seals from sixth- and seventh-century Constantinople, mostly belonging to consuls, provide a particularly intriguing set of comparanda.<sup>80</sup> While most seals surviving from



FIGURE 13. Zvart'noc', eagle capital (photo: courtesy of Toramanyan Archives, Erevan).

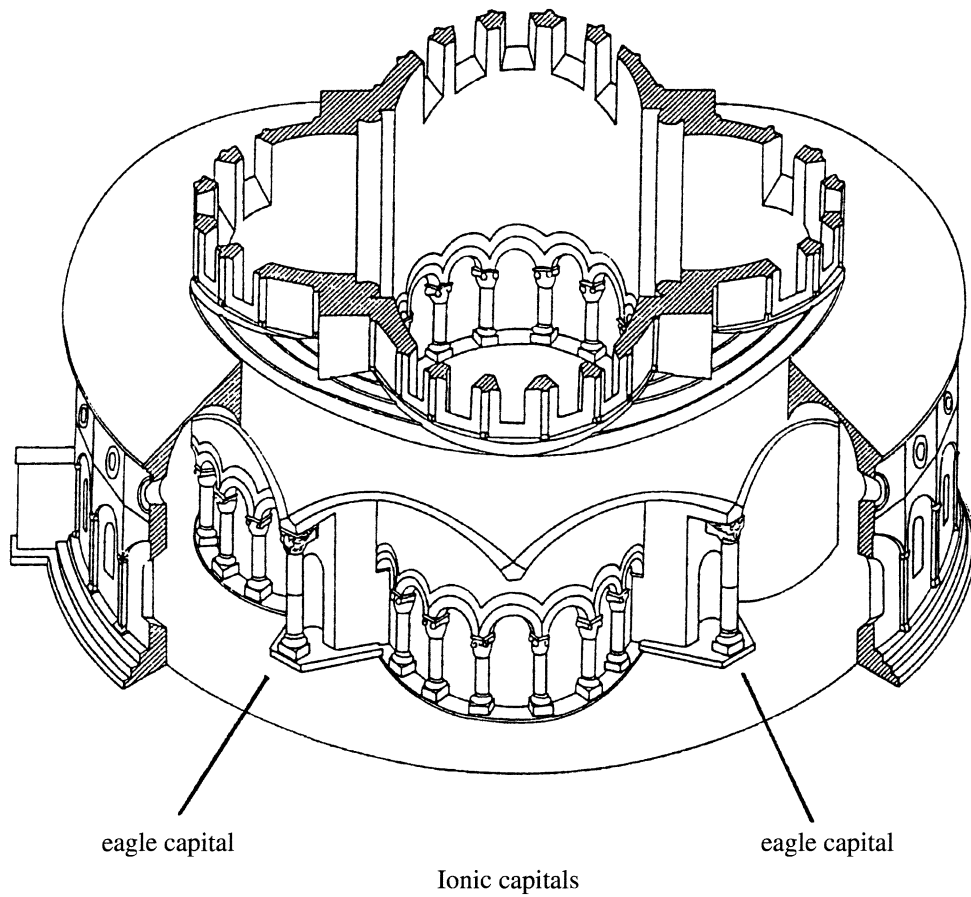


FIGURE 14. Zvart'noc', cutaway view of interior (adapted from Mnac'ankanyan, Zvart'noc', 1971, Fig. 9).

this era bear Greek words alone in the form of monograms and inscriptions, some bear images, whether of the Virgin (287 examples), of saints (8), of lions (3), or of eagles. The motif of the eagle with outstretched wings occurs on no fewer than 165 seals, making it the most popular iconographic type after the Virgin.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, it almost always appears in combination with the cross monogram. On a seventh-century seal belonging to an official named John, for example, we see an eagle in a pose similar to the eagles at Zuart'noc' and cross monograms on both obverse and reverse (Fig. 17).<sup>82</sup>

The conjunction of the eagle and cross monogram on such a large group of seals at precisely the time of Zuart'noc's construction is striking, and leads to the question whether Nersēs might consciously have adopted sigillographic iconography. Could he have come to know such seals during his tenure in the Byzantine army? Might he actually have possessed his own seal, decorated in obverse and reverse in the same manner as the capitals in the exedrae of his own church?<sup>83</sup> The repetition and alternation of eagle and monogram on the capitals would have conveyed to visitors a similar message of possession and identity. Viewed in this light, it is almost as if Nersēs set his seal on the church through the ornamentation of column and pier capitals. Through such verbal and visual devices, Nersēs effectively stated his affiliation with the empire.

#### *The Connotations of the Architectural Layout*

A consideration of the architecture of Zuart'noc' is rendered difficult because of the lack of a definitive reconstruction of the monument, a predicament related to the building's collapse in the ninth century and to the incomplete and destructive nature of initial excavations.<sup>84</sup> However, this has not prevented scholars from offering a wide array of theories as to the church's architectural sources and connecting it variously to the traditions of Constantinople, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine. Most persuasive among these, as indicated above, is Kleinbauer's argument for formal links to a group of monuments in Syria and Mesopotamia.<sup>85</sup> The churches of Bosra,<sup>86</sup> Resafa,<sup>87</sup> Seleucia-Peria,<sup>88</sup> and Apamea (Fig. 18),<sup>89</sup> all dating from the fifth and sixth centuries, feature, like Zuart'noc', a double-shell design with central quatrefoil core, ambulatory, and protruding east end, and they have comparable dimensions.<sup>90</sup>

As with the capital sculpture, it is not necessary to interpret the adoption of the Syrio-Mesopotamian plan at Zuart'noc' as politically or religiously motivated. The aisled tetraconch may have been chosen for its sheer visual power. For a patron of high position and strong ambitions, such a choice was only fitting: the aisled tetraconchs of Syria and Mesopotamia, as Kleinbauer put it, are among the "highest-ranking churches in *Oriens*."<sup>91</sup> However, as the iconography of the ambulatory capitals illustrates, Nersēs was not insensitive to the power of visual forms to convey political messages.

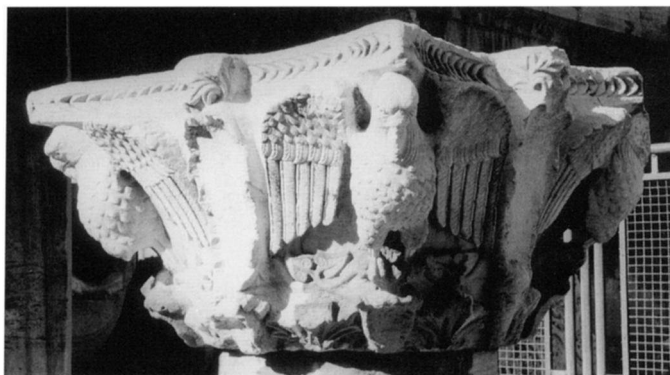


FIGURE 15. Istanbul, Archeological Museum, eagle capital (photo: courtesy of Slobodan Ćurčić).



FIGURE 16. Florence, Bargello Museum, ivory diptych of empress Ariadne (photo: Scala/Art Resource, NY).



FIGURE 17. *Byzantine lead seal belonging to John (photo: Zacos and Veglery, Byzantine Lead Seals, II, Pl. 68, No. 650).*

Kleinbauer suggested that the adoption of the aisled tetraconch reflects a desire to foster relations with Syrian Monophysites. The opposite, I believe, may be argued. As Kleinbauer himself observed, all the Syrian aisled tetraconchs were Orthodox foundations, and they remained in Orthodox hands, it seems, through the seventh century. Bosra, Resafa, Seleucia-Peria, and Apamea were erected within the patriarchate of Antioch, which was overseen by Constantinople.<sup>92</sup> Textual and physical evidence identifies the churches as official Chalcedonian foundations. Seleucia-Peria, part of the imperial province Syria Prima, was the seat of a bishop as early as 359: the bishops were called “comprovincial bishops.”<sup>93</sup> In the year 459, around the time the tetraconch was erected, the city was referred to as a “metropolis,” implying its episcopal status.<sup>94</sup> The church at Apamea lies in the capital city and metropolitan bishopric of Syria Secunda, established between 413 and 417. With its synthronon, cathedra, and baptistery, the tetraconch is likely to have been an episcopal foundation. Moreover, Jean-Charles Balty, in the late 1960s and 1970s, uncovered inscriptions linking the site to the bishop Paul, active during the 530s.<sup>95</sup> The church at Resafa was built in the 520s, only a few years after Resafa was elevated to the rank of city and metropolis, which was, as Kleinbauer remarks, “quite possibly the *raison d’être* for the erection of the tetraconch.”<sup>96</sup> Evidence of a synthronon, baptismal font, and a nearby complex of buildings suggests that this was the headquarters of the local bishop.<sup>97</sup> The church at Bosra, a rectangular structure with an internally marked tetraconch, was founded under the “most holy Julianus, archbishop,” as a Greek inscription reveals.<sup>98</sup> It is significant that the structures most like Zuart’noc’ stand in important centers of Orthodoxy. Given Nersēs’ Chalcedonian inclinations, it seems likely that he adopted the architectural form for its associations with Byzantine Christianity rather than because of its Syrian and Mesopotamian connections.<sup>99</sup>

We may interpret other features of Zuart’noc’ in this way, specifically the concurrence of crypt, synthronon, and ambo. The crypt is a large circular space in the center of the naos floor, entered from the west by five steps (Fig. 19).<sup>100</sup> The synthronon would have been situated within the apse, which was itself approached by three staircases—two lateral and one central—making Zuart’noc’’s east end more elaborate than that in contemporary Armenian churches.<sup>101</sup> The ambo, decorated with attached colonnettes, rising to about five feet, was still largely preserved at the beginning of the twentieth century (Fig. 20). The coincidence of these three elements is rare in Syria and Mesopotamia: while the synthronon appears frequently, we do not find evidence of either ambo or crypt in the Syrian and North Mesopotamian aisled tetraconchs mentioned above.<sup>102</sup> Yet these three elements are characteristic of Constantinopolitan churches.<sup>103</sup> Crypts occur in several early churches: the fifth-century basilica of St. John Studios, the church of the Virgin at Chalkoprateia, and the church of St. Polyeuktos all contain cruciform crypts beneath their eastern apses.<sup>104</sup> St. John at Hebdomon (modern Bakirköy), whose double-shell octagon was excavated in 1921/23, also possessed a crypt, similarly positioned.<sup>105</sup> Ambos existed with certainty at Beyazit Church B, where we have actual remains, at Hagia Sophia, as we know from literary sources,<sup>106</sup> and also at St. Polyeuktos, St. John at Hebdomon, and St. Euphemia, among others. Synthronons are standard in Constantinopolitan structures.<sup>107</sup>

Zuart’noc’ thus presents, it seems, a specifically Armenian appropriation of Byzantine elements. Nersēs, as we know from Sebēos, traveled in “Greek territory” while in the army, and he and his architects, as we can infer from Zuart’noc’ itself, were familiar with Byzantine architectural idioms. He was received in Constantinople on at least one occasion, in 654, and it is likely that he visited the capital earlier as a Byzantine soldier: monuments such as Hagia Sophia and Sts. Sergius

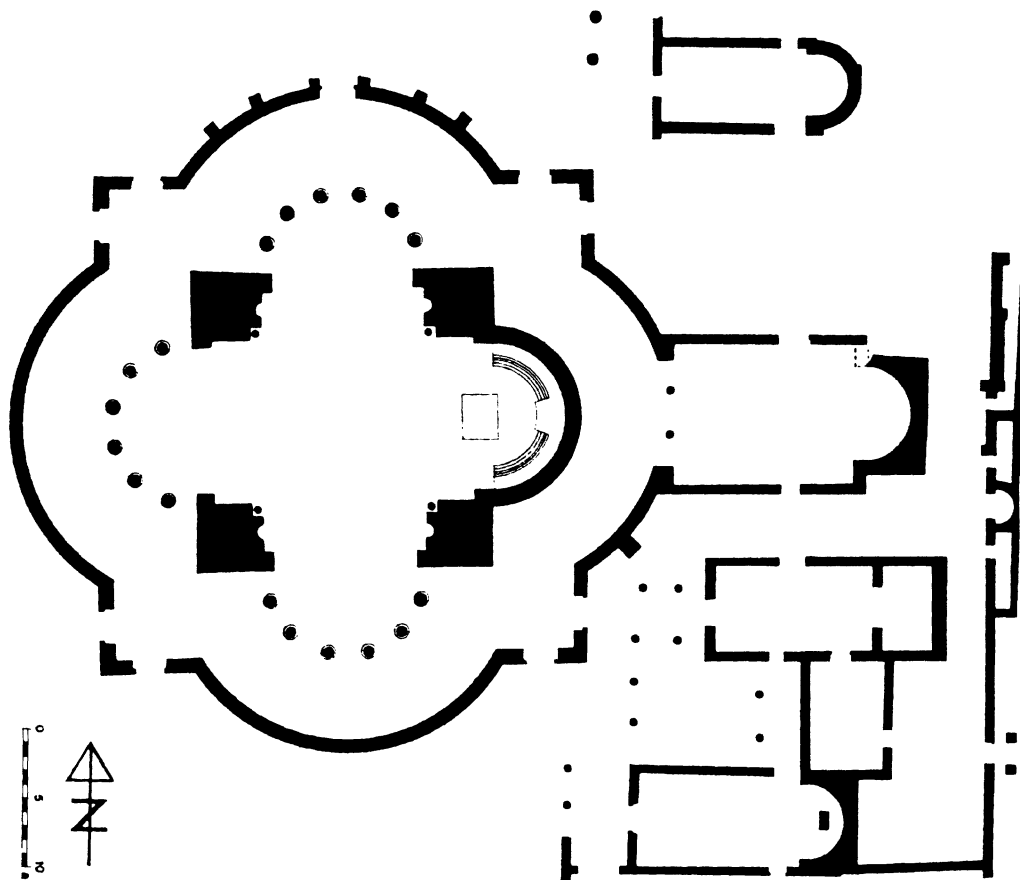


FIGURE 18. *Apamea, plan* (photo: Balty, *Apamée de Syrie*, 1972, Fig. 3).

and Bacchus would have surely inspired his admiration and may possibly have provided him with ideas for his commission.<sup>108</sup> Employing local building materials and area masons, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to reproduce a Constantinopolitan building. But by adopting an architectural type familiar to local crews and with strong associations with Byzantine Orthodoxy, and by providing the structure with liturgical furnishings characteristic of churches in the imperial capital, Nersēs created an expression of Byzantine affiliation within the constraints imposed by his locality.

#### *The Dedication*

Sebēos observes that Nersēs built his patriarchal complex close to Ējmiacin, the site traditionally associated with the conversion of Armenia to Christianity: Zuart’noc’, he says, was built on the road “where—they say—king Trdat had met St. Gregory.”<sup>109</sup> The site was thus associated particularly with Gregory the Illuminator, the first bishop and patron saint of Armenia, who converted the land in the early fourth century. Sebēos’ account of Nersēs’ dedication of the church to the “heavenly angels (*zuart’noc’n*), who had appeared as a multitude of heavenly hosts (*bazmut’iwn erknawor zawrac’n*),” also

links the church to the tradition of Armenia’s conversion to Christianity. According to the fifth-century text known as the *History of the Armenians* by Agat’angelos, Gregory experienced a vision in which he saw a multitude of heavenly beings:

And I looked up and saw the firmament of heaven opened, and the waters above it, divided like the firmament, for like valleys and mountain-tops they were divided and their infinite expanses were piled up on either side beyond sight. And the light flowed from above down to the earth, and with the light numberless hosts of shining two-winged creatures in human appearance with wings like fire.<sup>110</sup>

In his account of Nersēs’ dedication, Sebēos draws directly upon the text of Agat’angelos, repeating the phrase, “multitudes of heavenly angels.”

Nersēs, we know, was involved with another commission commemorating the life of St. Gregory. Two tenth-century chroniclers, Yovhannēs Draxanakerc’i and Step’anos Taronec’i, report that he built a chapel at the monastery of Xor Virap, where Gregory was cast down into a pit by the king Trdat, about 50 kilometers southeast of Ējmiacin.<sup>111</sup> Nersēs’ choice



FIGURE 19. Zuart'noc', crypt (photo: author).

of dedication, if seen as the product of a particular devotion to Gregory, might not seem to require explanation. And yet a dedication to the “heavenly angels,” to my knowledge, stands alone in the history of Armenian architecture. This leads to the more fundamental question, why did Nersēs not name the structure after Gregory himself? After all, the cathedral at Duin, at Nersēs’ former residence, was dedicated to the saint.

It is interesting that medieval writers assumed Zuart'noc' was dedicated to Gregory. Yovhannēs Drasxanakerc'i reports that Nersēs erected a “great and wonderful House of God in the name of St. Gregory,” wherein he is supposed to have deposited relics of the saint, although excavations have not unearthed any indication of such.<sup>112</sup> Step'anos Taronec'i, in his contemporary *Universal History*, writes that King Gagik built the tenth-century aisled tetraconch at Ani and dedicated it to Gregory in imitation of Zuart'noc',<sup>113</sup> which is called: “a large structure at Vałaršapat', dedicated to the same saint, that had fallen into ruins.”<sup>114</sup> Movsēs Dasxuranc'i, in his *History of the Caucasian Albanians*, a twelfth-century text, also refers to Zuart'noc' as the church of Gregory.<sup>115</sup>

Nersēs' exceptional choice of dedication is best understood, perhaps, in light of the historical circumstances at the time of the construction of Zuart'noc'. The strong presence of the staunchly orthodox Byzantine army in Armenia in the 640s might well have discouraged a dedication to the father of Armenian Christianity.<sup>116</sup> A dedication to the “heavenly host,” while implicitly connected to Gregory, would not have overtly proclaimed Armenia's religious position and would certainly have excited less rancor. This would have been particularly

important given the function of Zuart'noc' as the patriarchal church of Armenia. Unlike the chapel at Xor Virap, the structure was laid out *ex novo* on a grand scale: Nersēs seems to have intended it as the official showcase of his office. Furnished with his own monogrammed capitals, Zuart'noc' also projected the clearest statement of his identity.

In exploring possible grounds for the dedication, it is also useful to consider the precise terms of the dedication more carefully. The term used for “host” is translated from the original Armenian “*zawrk*,” which carries a range of meanings. Its primary definition refers not to angelic beings but to military troops. *Zawr* is the root for terms related to the military; hence *zawrakan* refers to army guards and *zawravar* to military generals. A number of scholars thus translate the dedication of Zuart'noc' as “multitudes of heavenly soldiers” or a “celestial militia.” The invocation of a celestial army was familiar in Byzantium. Gregory of Nazianzus' *Second Oration on Easter*, recited as part of the Easter liturgy for centuries after its fifth-century composition, features the motif of the “heavenly host,” employing the Greek word “*stratias*” (soldiers, army).<sup>117</sup> In the militarized climate of seventh-century Armenia, the desire for supernatural protection is not surprising, and a protective host with specifically military powers would have corresponded precisely to the situation at hand.

The very image was invoked, in fact, in reference to the Byzantine armies in the eastern frontier only a few decades before the erection of Zuart'noc'. In the opening to the second part of his poem on the military campaign of Heraclius in Persia, George of Pisidia summons a celestial militia to his aid:

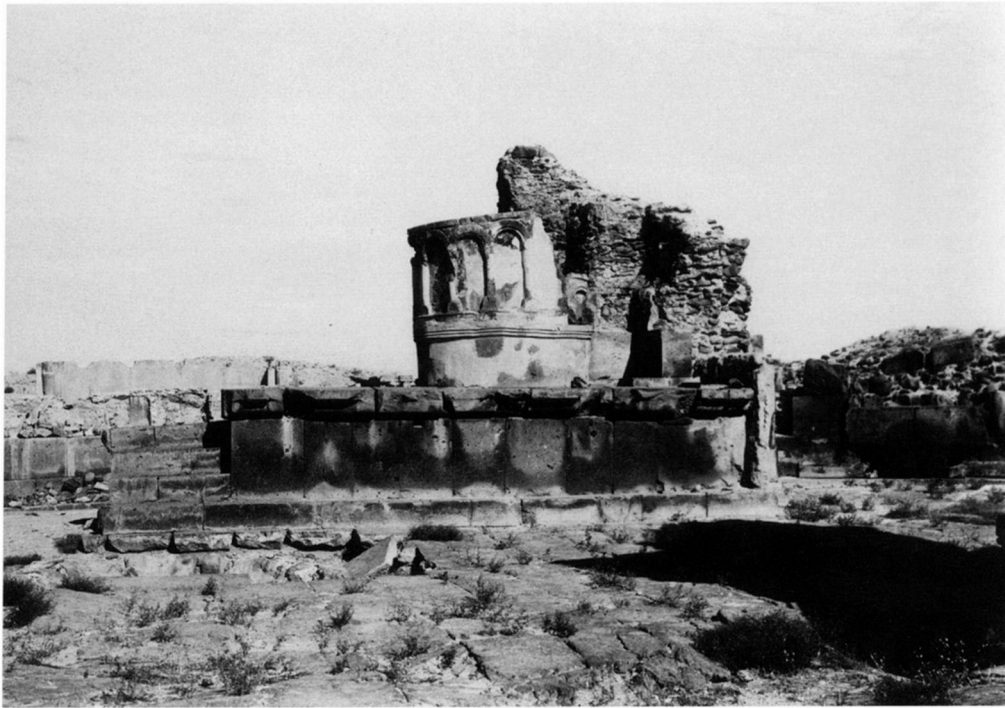


FIGURE 20. Zuart'noc, ambo (photo: courtesy of Toramanyan Archives, Erevan).

O Trinity, arranging with a light-bringing word, the immaterial heavenly armies to a fiery and firm position. Teach me to move a well-aimed sword against the enemies, as a language and sharpened weapon.<sup>118</sup>

Having served in the Byzantine army, Nersēs was acquainted with Byzantium primarily as a military apparatus.<sup>119</sup> His predecessor, the catholicos Ēzr, maintained close contact with the military during his religious office, residing, according to Sebēos, “in the Greek camp until the general satisfied his wishes and established detachments of soldiers and the distribution of stores over the whole land.”<sup>120</sup> It is possible that Nersēs was equally involved with the army. Regardless, it is tempting to view his unusual dedication as a response to the climate of the mid-seventh century and, more specifically, to the presence of the powerful troops that occupied Armenia during that period.

### Conclusion

In 668, around seven years after the death of Nersēs, Armenians signed a treaty with the Arabs, and Byzantine military occupation, from that point, was only a memory. However, during the first ten years of Nersēs' office, the most probable period for the construction of Zuart'noc, Armenia was troubled by factions and swiftly changing alliances: in 651 T'ēodoros Rštuni was commander of the Byzantine army in Armenia; one to two years later the Arabs proclaimed him “Presiding Prince of Armenia.” Treachery and suspicion run

high in Sebēos' *History*. What the Byzantines desired were statements of alliance, as indicated by emperor Heraclius' request for “a pact between you and me with an oath, in writing and with a seal.”<sup>121</sup> In this light, it is important to recall that Constans' anger toward Nersēs was incited, according to Sebēos, when an Armenian bishop showed the emperor a written pact signed—and broken—by Nersēs. In affirming his pro-Byzantine position, then, it is fitting that Nersēs produced a new document, stamped with iconography used on one of the most popular Byzantine seals of the seventh century.

Nersēs' commission provides insight into the Armenian perception of Byzantium, the empire inhabitants of Armenia would have viewed, above all, as the empire of Chalcedonian Christianity. In the seventh century, Armenians would have known Byzantium chiefly through the military, either having served in it, as Nersēs did, or having encountered Byzantine troops on local soil. They would also have been acquainted with Byzantine objects, especially coins and seals, the former being particularly numerous as Greater Armenia did not mint its own coins in the medieval era. The Greek language, too, would have represented foreignness. By employing an architectural form with Orthodox associations, Constantinopolitan liturgical furnishings, sigillographic iconography, and Greek inscriptions, Nersēs created a specific and local response to the powerful empire to the west. Hence Zuart'noc was much more than a receptacle for Byzantine influence: it was a potent symbol of kinship to Byzantium, or to a Byzantium imagined from the eastern front.<sup>122</sup>

- \* This article is based on research undertaken for my Ph.D. dissertation, "Medieval Armenian Architecture in Historiography: Josef Strzygowski in his Legacy" (Princeton University, 1998), to be published in revised form by Peeters as *Medieval Armenian Architecture: Constructions of Race and Nation* (Leuven, forthcoming). The work considers the role played by Strzygowski in the retreat from cross-cultural studies of Armenian architecture and argues for the importance of inquiries into patronage. An earlier version of the present paper was delivered in November 1998 at the Byzantine Studies Conference in Lexington, Kentucky. It has benefited from the comments and critique of the anonymous reviewers for *Gesta*, as well as Peter Brown, Peter Cowe, Slobodan Ćurčić, Lois Drewer, Robert Hewsen, Nina Garsoïan, Lynn Jones, W. Eugene Kleinbauer, Bissera Pentcheva, James R. Russell, Elizabeth Sears, Michael Stone, Alice Taylor, Robert Thomson, and Bert Vaux, among others. The positions stated in this article are not necessarily theirs, and all errors and shortcomings are my own. I also wish to thank Marina T'oramanyan, granddaughter of T'oros T'oramanyan, Armenian architect and scholar, for generously allowing me access to the photographs he took at Zuart'-noc' at the turn of the century. It is with her permission that I offer herein a selection of these photographs.
1. The transcription of Armenian names follows the system employed in the *Revue des études arméniennes*, except for names of modern Armenologists who have preferred alternate transcriptions.
  2. As described by the seventh-century Armenian historian Sebēos; the present ecosystem is no different. See *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*, ed. and trans. R. W. Thomson, J. Howard-Johnston, and T. Greenwood, 2 vols. (Liverpool, 1999), I, 45, 112.
  3. Nersēs and the complex of Zuart'-noc' are mentioned not only in Sebēos' contemporary account but also in the tenth-century chronicle of Yovhannēs Draxanakert'i, Tovma Arcruni's *History of the House of Arcrunik'*, the twelfth-century *History of the Caucasian Albanians* of Movsēs Dasxuranc'i, and the thirteenth-century *Universal History* of Vardan Arewelc'i.
  4. Nersēs' constructions are reported in an array of sources, including texts by Yovhannēs Draxanakert'i and Step'anos Taronec'i, discussed below, and by the tenth-century Georgian monk George Merc'uli, who relates that Nersēs built a church at Iṣṣan. See P. Peeters, "Histoires monastiques géorgiennes, *Analecta Bollandiana*, XXXVI/XXXVII (1917/19 [1922]), 250. In no case, however, do extant physical remains allow us to conduct a formal comparison with Zuart'-noc'. Iṣṣan, rebuilt in the ninth and eleventh centuries, has not been excavated; the archaeological reports from Duin are inconclusive; and the chapel at Xor Virap dates in its present state to the thirteenth or fourteenth century. Hence Zuart'-noc' is the single surviving example of Nersēs' commissions and the only monument to be cited in a contemporary source.
  5. The initial archaeological findings were published by M. Ter-Movsēsyan, "Excavations of the Church Ruins of Saint Gregory," *Izvestija Imperatorskogo Arkheologicheskogo Komissiiia*, VII (1903), 1–48 (in Russian). A student of Nikolai Marr, Aṣṣarbek Kalantar, produced important but overlooked data after a survey of 1931, the results of which are published in a posthumous collection of his works, *Armenia from the Stone Age to the Middle Ages: Selected Papers of Ashkharbek Kalantar*, ed. G. Kharakhanyan (Paris, 1994), 53–68. Excavations resumed in the 1950s under Soviet rule. They were carried out by several scholars, including Step'an Mnac'akanyan, who published the most significant of his findings in *Izvestija Akademii Nauk Armianskoi S.S.R., Obshchestvennye Nauki* (Erevan, 1959), No. 4, 69–86, and No. 9, and in his monograph, *Zuart'-noc'* (Moscow, 1971).
  6. T'oramanyan's famous reconstruction, in which he proposed three cylindrical stories for the monument instead of the accepted two, was initially received with great skepticism. However, when a stone model of the tenth-century rotunda of St. Gregory in the medieval city of Ani was unearthed that bore a resemblance to the reconstruction, T'oramanyan's position came into favor. His studies of the monument have been collected in two posthumous works, *Materials for the History of Armenian Architecture* [*Nyu'er Haykakan Ćartarapetu'yan Patmut'yan*], ed. I. Orbeli (Erevan, 1942), and, of more direct relevance, *Zuart'-noc'-Gagkaṣen* (Erevan, 1984). At least five subsequent works offer reconstructions of Zuart'-noc', including that of Tiran Marut'yan, *Zuart'-noc' ev zuart'-noc'atip taĉamer* (Erevan, 1963), which incorporates many of T'oramanyan's ideas, and Mnac'akanyan, *Zuart'-noc'*, where it is suggested that the second tier was not cylindrical but fitted with semi-circular protruding conches. See also V. Harut'yunyan, *Zuart'-noc'* (Erevan, 1954).
  7. The origins of the aisled tetraconch type have been treated by several scholars, including Josef Strzygowski. In *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa* (Vienna, 1918), 108–118, he proposed that the type was an offspring of Iranian centrally-planned forms. See also A. Grabar, *Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1943–46), II, 371. W. E. Kleinbauer first treated the problem of architectural type in depth. See "The Origins and Function of the Aisled Tetraconch in Syria and Mesopotamia," *DOP*, XXVII (1973), 89–114; "Zvart'nots and the Origins of Christian Architecture," *AB*, LIV (1972), 245–262; and "The Aisled Tetraconch" (Dissertation, Princeton University, 1967). See also D. Piguet-Panayotova, "Recherches sur les tetraconques à déambulatoire et leur décor en Transcaucasie au VII siècle," *Oriens Christianus*, LXXIII (1989), 166–212. Piguet-Panayotova, seemingly unaware of Kleinbauer's work, assigned a group of aisled tetraconchs in the Caucasus to one of two major traditions: Byzantine (Iṣṣan, Zuart'-noc', Bana) and Iranian (Lekit). I find this theory, as well as her argument that Zuart'-noc' was meant to "express Armenia's political and religious independence from Byzantium" (182), difficult to support.
  8. "Zvart'nots," 261.
  9. *Ibid.*, n. 71.
  10. See A. Érmian, "Sur certaines modifications subies par les monuments arméniens au VIIe siècle," *Revue des études arméniennes*, N.S. VIII (1970), 251–266. For a general study of Byzantine motifs in pre-Arab Armenian sculpture, including the program at Zuart'-noc', see P. Donabédian, "Apports byzantins dans la sculpture arménienne préarabe," in *L'Arménie et Byzance* (Paris, 1996), 89–98, and Mnac'akanyan, *Zuart'-noc'*, 1–15.
  11. See, for example, O. Demus, *Byzantium and the Medieval West* (New York, 1970), and A. H. S. Megaw, "Byzantine Architecture and Decoration in Cyprus: Metropolitan or Provincial?," *DOP*, XXVIII (1974), 59–69.
  12. For example, B. Zeitler, "Perceptions of the Levant: Studies in the Arts of the Latin East" (Dissertation, University of London, 1992), and *eadem*, "Cross-Cultural Interpretations of Imagery in the Middle Ages," *AB*, LXXVI (1994), 680–695. See also L.-A. Hunt, "Art and Colonialism: The Mosaics of the Church of the Nativity of Bethlehem (1169) and the Problem of 'Crusader' Art," *DOP*, XLV (1991), 69–86. For a variety of approaches, see *The Medieval Mediterranean: Cross-Cultural Contacts*, ed. M. Chiat and K. Reyerson (St. Cloud, MN, 1988).
  13. See L. Jones, "The Church of the Holy Cross and the Iconography of Kingship," *Gesta*, XXXIII/2 (1994), 104–117; *eadem*, "Between Byzantium and Islam: Royal Iconography and the Church of the Holy Cross at Aghtamar" (Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1995); A. Eastmond, *Royal Imagery in Medieval Georgia* (University Park, PA, 1998); and G. Hovsēp'yan, *Halbakeank'ə kam Proṣeank'ə hayoc' patmut'yan məj*, 3 vols. (Vafarṣapat', 1928; Jerusalem, 1942; New York, 1943).

14. Sebēos is the only source for Armenian-Byzantine relations in the seventh century and, indeed, an important source for sixth- and seventh-century Byzantine history. Translations, in addition to that by R. W. Thomson used in this article, include F. Macler's *Histoire d'Heraclius* (Paris, 1904); a modern Eastern Armenian translation, *Patmut'iwn Sebeosi*, ed. and trans. G. V. Abgaryan (Erevan, 1979); R. Bedrosian's *Sebēos' History* (New York, 1985); and C. Gugerotti's *Sebēos, Storia* (Verona, 1990).
15. For the controversy surrounding the manuscript tradition, the date, and the identity of the author, as well as relevant bibliography, see Thomson in *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*, and D. Frendo's "Sebēos and the Armenian Historiographical Tradition in the Context of Byzantine-Iranian Relations," *Peritia*, IV (1985), 1–20. See further, M. K. Krikorian, "Sebēos, Historian of the Seventh Century," and Z. Arzumaniyan, "A Critique of Sebēos and his History of Heraclius: A Seventh-Century Document," in *Classical Armenian Culture: Influences and Creativity*, ed. T. J. Samuelian (Philadelphia, 1982), 52–66, 68–78.
16. For general studies of this era, see J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century* (Cambridge, 1990); W. Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest* (Amsterdam, 1981); and *idem*, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (Cambridge, 1992).
17. For discussion and bibliography, see Sebēos' *History*, trans. Thomson, II, 243–247.
18. Thomson (*ibid.*, II, 254) has suggested that Ṛštuni's official title was *Magister Militum per Armeniam*.
19. For the terms of this treaty and the consequent Byzantine defeat at Mardastan in southwestern Anatolia, see *ibid.*, II, 267–268.
20. It has been persuasively suggested (*ibid.*, II, 270–272) that the news of Ṛštuni's shift in allegiance was deliberately leaked in order to lure Constans away from Constantinople just when an Arab siege on the capital was being prepared.
21. This war lasted five years, from 656 to 661, at which time the caliph Muawiya emerged triumphant. See *ibid.*, II, 284–288.
22. *Ibid.*, II, 283.
23. *Ibid.*, I, 42, 101.
24. *Ibid.*, I, 49, 140.
25. *Ibid.*
26. N. G. Garsoïan, "The Armenian Church," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford, 1991), I, 179.
27. This document was undoubtedly a record from the 648/49 Council of Duin, in which the Armenians again denounced Chalcedonianism. Around four years earlier, another council had been held at Duin in which a religious union with Byzantium had been accepted. Understandably, Sebēos does not mention this council. See Frendo, "Sebēos and the Armenian Historiographical Tradition," 5.
28. Sebēos, *History*, trans. Thomson, I, 49, 142.
29. While Sebēos writes of the immediate departure of Nersēs with Constans after the communion at Duin, Thomson believes that this visit did not take place until after the Arab raid on Constantinople of 654 (*ibid.*, I, 49, 142, and 52, 151). During Nersēs' trip, "great honors" were bestowed upon him by Constans, most likely as a result of his official compliance with the emperor's wishes.
30. The schism had occurred at the Council of Chalcedon. On this council and the subsequent religious divisions within Armenia, see N. G. Garsoïan, *L'église arménienne et le grand schisme d'Orient*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, DLXXIV (Leuven, 1999). A summary of Armenian theological positions is provided by K. Maksoudian, "The Armenian Church," in *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts*, ed. T. F. Mathews and R. S. Wieck (Princeton, 1994).
31. "Otherwise, we shall make for ourselves another Catholicos and do you hold your authority on the Persian side" (Sebēos, *History*, trans. Thomson, I, 41, 91). It should be noted that after Ēzr agreed to take the sacrament, he was given the salt mine at Koḅb in Armenia. Another Armenian, the *aspet* Varaztiroc', also received gifts from Heraclius and Constans (*ibid.*, I, 41, 92).
32. "Then the king, with the patriarch, gave a command, and they wrote an edict to the Armenians that they should effect a union of faith with Rome and should not scorn the council of [Chalcedon] and that Tome [of Leo]" (*ibid.*, I, 45, 113). Constans also dispatched a Chalcedonian Armenian theologian from Constantinople to persuade the Armenians to relinquish their heresy: a man named Dawit' from the village of Bagawan (*ibid.*, I, 45, 113).
33. This letter is included in Sebēos' *History* (*ibid.*, I, 114–132). For further discussion and relevant bibliography, see *ibid.*, II, 263, and R. W. Thomson, "The Defense of Armenian Orthodoxy in Sebeos," in *AETOS: Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango*, ed. I. Ševčenko and I. Hutter (Stuttgart, 1998), 329–341.
34. "[The soldiers] wrote a complaint to Constans . . . and to the patriarch: 'We are considered as impious in this country, because they reckon the council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo to be an insult to Jesus Christ, and they anathematize them'" (Sebēos, *History*, trans. Thomson, I, 45, 113).
35. *Ibid.*, I, 48, 139.
36. Sebēos writes (*ibid.*, I, 48, 139) that the regions of "Aḷuank' and Siwnik' and Sephakan Gund did not submit. [Thus imperial troops] pillaged their lands, took away whatever they found, and returned to the [emperor]."
37. Thomson (*ibid.*, II, 269) believes that the Byzantine military presence in Armenia may have been more permanent, suggesting that throughout the 640s and early 650s "it is possible . . . that *Magister Militum per Orientem* was stationed [there] continuously . . ."
38. Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest*, 137.
39. *Ibid.*, 64.
40. I follow Thomson's dating (*History*, I, 101 n. 630) rather than that of G. Garritte, who proposed 642 to 662 (*La Narratio de Rebus Armeniae*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, CXXXII [Leuven, 1952], 339). Sebēos does not mention the year of Nersēs' death, but the start of his term of office coincided with the massacre at Duin, when his predecessor Ēzr died (see above, n. 23). Sebēos and his contemporary, Łevond, provide different dates for the event, which has led to some disagreement in the secondary literature.
41. Sebeos, *History*, trans. Thomson, I, 45, 112.
42. It is tempting to believe that Constans visited Zuart'noc' during this period, but Sebēos makes no mention of it. The complexity and grandeur of the monument, as well as the axial spaces of the palace complex, invite one to imagine that the space was intended—even if not used—to receive the emperor.
43. *Ibid.*, I, 52, 151.
44. The establishment of a new catholicate could also have served to distinguish Nersēs' confessional position from that of his predecessors. In this regard, we may note that in 591 the Byzantine emperor Maurice similarly set up in Armenia a new Chalcedonian "anti-catholicos" at Awan to rival that of Duin. See Garsoïan, *L'église arménienne*, 271–272.
45. Kleinbauer observed hatchmarks around the apse of the building and concluded that a "high stone bench once ringed the inner surface of the

- wall in the east conch, bringing to mind the *synthronon* in Byzantine churches." He noted: "If this is a clerical bench, it would be the only one of its kind known in Armenia." See "Zvart'nots," 247. Sebēos alludes to a *synthronon* in the passage recording the communion at Duin (*History*, trans. Thomson, I, 49, 141).
46. The chamber is a feature standard to the double-aisle tetraconchs of Syria and Mesopotamia, and its position, which strongly suggests it was connected with the preparations for the liturgy, may reflect the needs of the Chalcedonian rite.
  47. Mosaic fragments found in 1900 by X. Dadyan at the east end of the church next to the ambo were first preserved and recorded by Ter-Movsēsyān (*Izvestija*, VII, 25). Only the fragment displaying the upper part of a cross was known to Strzygowski, who illustrated it in his *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*, Fig. 335. He reported that it was located in the museum of Zvart'not' and lay in a state of neglect. That the mosaic had suffered serious damage can be deduced from a comparison of reproductions in Ter-Movsēsyān's and Strzygowski's studies.
  48. Since one of the figures is inscribed with the name "Hohan," it has been suggested that these are portrait busts (Mnac'akanyan, *Zvart'not'*, 149; and S. Der Nersessian, *L'art arménien* [Paris, 1977], 51). The inscription, however, could be a latter addition, since it is simply scratched next to the figure and written in Armenian in an informal hand. Moreover, although portraits of builders and masons can be found in later medieval Armenian art, they were not part of standard iconography either in seventh-century Armenia or Byzantium. See *The Architect: Chapters in the History of the Profession*, ed. S. Kostof (New York, 1977), 59–95, and, for Armenian materials, H. Vahramyan, "Architects and Master Builders in Medieval Armenia," in *Architettura medievale armena* (Rome, 1968), 35–41. I would like to thank Nira Stone for bibliographical suggestions.
  49. Varazdat Harut'yunyan relates Zvart'not' to earlier inscribed tetraconchs in Armenia on the basis of its tetraconchal core, despite the fact that Zvart'not' features a double-shell plan. The theory of Armenian roots, often repeated in the scholarly literature, overstates the commonalities between the building types and assumes Armenian architecture to be an insular phenomenon in which each development issues directly from its predecessor without contact from neighboring traditions. For further discussion of trends in the scholarly literature and, particularly, the roles of nationalism and racism in shaping the field, see Maranci, *Medieval Armenian Architecture* (forthcoming).
  50. Zvart'not', however, is one of the first churches to have been so lavishly decorated.
  51. See A. B. Érémiān, *La chiesa di S. Hripsime*, trans. N. Cruciani (Milan, 1972).
  52. The fifth-century basilicas of Ereruyk', K'asał, and Duin all employ free-standing supports, as do the seventh-century domed basilicas of Talin and Mren. See Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*, I, for further examples. The piers are usually rectangular, cross-shaped, T-shaped, or irregular in form. In seventh-century Armenian churches, vaults and domes are either carried by the perimeter walls, as at Hrip'simē, or by piers.
  53. The western belltower is a later addition.
  54. The church of Iṣṣan might be an exception, for exedrae are found at the north and south of the structure. The present church dates to the ninth and eleventh centuries; whether the exedrae belong to a seventh-century phase has yet to be confirmed archeologically.
  55. These capitals are commonly believed to belong to the seventh-century phase, and some have attributed them to Nersēs' patronage. However, the archaeological evidence is confusing and the precise date of the capitals, as well as the function of the structure to which they belonged, has not been established. On the findings at Duin, see V. Harut'yunyan, *Duin: Ćartarapetakan husarjanner āst pelulmneri nyut'eri* (Erevan, 1950), and M. d'Onofrio, *Le chiese di Dvin*, Studi di architettura medievale armena, III (Rome, 1973).
  56. For literature on the monograms, see T'oramanyan, *Nyut'er Haykakan Ćartarapetu'yan Patmut'yan*, and *Zvart'not'–Gagkašen*. See also Strzygowski, *Das Etschmiadzin-Evangeliar*, Byzantinische Denkmaler, I (Vienna, 1891), 10; and *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*, 110, 682.
  57. A survey of H. A. Orbeli's *Divan Hay Vimagrut'yun k'argorc varpetner*, Corpus Inscriptionum Armeniacum, 6 vols. (Erevan, 1966), reveals standard abbreviations used for words including the *nomina sacra* and formulas such as "in the year. . ." These abbreviations can take the form of cross-monograms, as seen in an inscription at the cathedral of Ani (I, 49, No. 113) and on a cross-stone (*xač'kar*) at the monastery of Tat'ev (II, 19, No. 25). I have yet to encounter a monogram formed from the name of a patron (or mason), let alone a monogrammed capital, in Armenia. For advice on this matter I thank Michael Stone and James Russell.
  58. The inscription reads: *Ναρσης εποησεν μνημονευσατε* ("Remember Nērsēs who constructed this").
  59. We find, for example, Greek inscriptions at the sixth-century basilica of Ereruyk' as well as a bilingual Greek-Armenian inscription at the late sixth-century church of Avan. Other than a short inscription naming Paul and Thecla at the cathedral of Ėjmiacin, which is difficult to date, and a Greek graffito at the church of Mastara, built in the first half of the seventh century, Greek inscriptions are largely obsolete.
  60. See J. R. Russell, "On the Origins and Invention of the Armenian Script," *Le Muséon* (1994), 317–331.
  61. Translation of Greek texts drops off sharply after the fifth century, which suggests a concomitant decline in knowledge of Greek. However, the question of Greek literacy in medieval Armenia is a complex one and requires further investigation.
  62. Little investigation has been directed toward the meaning and function of monogrammed capitals in Byzantium, despite their abundance. See, however, H. Swainson, "Monograms on the Capitals of S. Sergius at Constantinople," *BZ*, IV (1895), 106–181, in which similarities between the capitals in Sts. Sergius and Bacchus and in Hagia Sophia are noted.
  63. See T. F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park, PA, 1971), 42–55. See also A. van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches* (London, 1912), 62–83; J. Ebersolt and A. Thiers, *Les églises de Constantinople* (Paris, 1913), 21–51; and C. Gurlitt, *Die Baukunst Konstantinopels* (Berlin, 1912), I, 18–20.
  64. R. Kautzsch, *Kapitellstudien* (Leipzig, 1936), Pl. 37, Fig. 387.
  65. *Ibid.*, 195.
  66. Theodora's monogram at Hagia Sophia is in the form of a cross, while Justinian's is in the form of a square. But between 560 and 565, the last five years of his reign, Justinian used the cross monogram on coins. Noting that in these years the emperor followed the teaching of *Aphthartodocetism*, a form of Monophysitism formulated by Julian of Halicarnassos, Walter Fink proposed a connection between Justinian's religious inclinations and his choice of monogram. See his "Das frühbyzantinische Monogramm," *JÖB*, XXX (1981), 75–86; and "Neue Deutungsvorschläge zu einigen byzantinischen Monogrammen," *Byzantios* (1984), 85–94. See also V. Gardthausen, *Das alte Monogramm* (Leipzig, 1924). What is fascinating is how closely Nersēs' monogram resembles that of Justinian, though composed of fewer characters (*ibid.*, 77).
  67. As, for example, the monogram on an Ionic capital of bishop Petrus in the sixth-century church of Salona. See Kautzsch, *Kapitellstudien*, 19.

- Pl. 27. Here, the monogram is not enclosed within a medallion but is incised directly into the surface of the capital, between the two volutes.
68. At the church of St. John of Ephesus, the monograms of Justinian and Theodora decorate Ionic capitals. Here the monogram appears above the volutes on the impost block (*ibid.*, 177, Pl. 567a).
  69. Kleinbauer, "Zuart'nots," n. 67.
  70. The combination of flat interweave pattern and Ionic volutes is encountered on a capital preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Jerusalem; it is also found in the Adriatic and in Egypt. See E. Kitzinger, "The Horse and Lion Tapestry," *DOP*, III (1946), 1–72, Appendix, Figs. 112–118.
  71. Another capital at Apamea bears a medallion with a Greek inscription, but the parallel with Zuart'noc' is distant, for the inscription is not a monogram but a full phrase, proclaiming the monument "the work of the very pious Paul, metropolitan of Apamea." Further, the capital is of the Corinthian order and features sharply undercut acanthus leaves. See J.-C. Balty, "L'évêque Paul et le programme architectural et décoratif de la cathédrale d'Apamée," in *Mélanges d'histoire ancienne et d'archéologie offerts à Paul Collart*, ed. P. Ducrey (Lausanne, 1976), 31–46.
  72. On the role Syria played in the formation of Armenian art and architecture, see A. Khatchatrian, *L'architecture arménienne du IV<sup>e</sup> au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1971).
  73. Archeological evidence for the original placement of the eagle capitals includes the dimensions of their bases, which exactly match those of the pier colonnettes, and the fact that in each case the capital's fourth side, which would have abutted a pier, remained uncarved.
  74. However, in the tenth century and later eagles appear regularly in the relief sculpture of the Transcaucasus; a particularly fine example occurs on the thirteenth-century three-storied chapel at Elvard.
  75. See Kitzinger, "The Horse and Lion Tapestry," and J. Kramer, *Skulpturen mit Adlerfiguren an Bauten des 5. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. in Konstantinopel* (Cologne, 1968).
  76. Another example, from the late fifth-century monastery of Alahan in southwestern Anatolia, incorporates features of the Corinthian order (*ibid.*, Fig. 38). Additional parallels to the Zuart'noc' eagles include the sculpted eagles excavated at the temple of Ba'al Shamin in Syria: probably functioning as acroteria, they have the same frontal pose and a similar articulation of feathers. See H. Seyrig, "Nouveaux monuments palmyréniens des cultes de Bel et de Baalshamin," *Syria* (1933), 253–254.
  77. See generally A. Cutler, "Eagles," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, I, 669.
  78. See P. Berger, *The Insignia of the Notitia Dignitatum* (New York, 1987), and, for a general discussion of military insignia, R. Grosse, "Die Fahnen in der römisch-byzantinische Armee," *BZ*, XXIV (1924), 359–372.
  79. See R. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen und verwandte Denkmäler* (Berlin, 1929), 210–205; and A. Grabar, *L'âge d'or de Justinien* (Paris, 1966), 277. Eagles also feature prominently on an early sixth-century consular diptych, possibly from Gaul, located in the cathedral museum at Bourges. In this ivory, a pair of eagles turn their heads to look at each other, just as they do at Zuart'noc'. See J. Dumoutet, "Mémoire sur les diptyques de la cathédrale de Bourges," *Mémoires lus à la Sorbonne* (1863), 229–242.
  80. See G. Zacos and A. Vegler, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, 2 vols. (Basel, 1972–85), II, Nos. 490–546. Most of the seals date to the seventh century. Further, as J. Kramer has already pointed out, the cross monogram, more than other types of monographic devices, was used as a model for works of portable art such as coins and seals. See his "Kamperkapitelle mit den Monogrammen Kaiser Justinus II. und seiner Gemahlin, der Kaiserin Sophia in Yalova Kapicalari (Termal)," in *Festschrift für Klaus Wessel zum 70. Geburtstag* (Münich, 1988), 190.
  81. So great is the number of seals bearing eagles that Zacos and Vegler devote an entire chapter to the type, the only chapter that is organized iconographically.
  82. See also Zacos and Vegler, I, No. 650.
  83. It is tempting to imagine that Nersēs possessed such a seal. Circumstantial evidence suggests a close relation between the sculptural ornament at Zuart'noc' and Byzantine goods. We know that Nersēs received "great honors" at the imperial capital, an event that most likely included gift-giving. We also know that on at least one occasion Constans bestowed insignia on local authorities in the Caucasus (see above, n. 22). Eagles appeared on military insignia and could thus possibly have formed part of Nersēs' own emblem. The Zuart'noc' eagles may also have been inspired by silks (resembling, for example, the tenth-century textile of St. Germanus), as these were standard diplomatic gifts at the time. The capitals' unusual composition, in which the eagles seem to wrap around the stone, could be based on cloth design.
  84. Dadyan, in his initial excavations, dynamited some of the remains of the structure.
  85. Kleinbauer, "Zuart'nots," 261. Kleinbauer distinguished between the aisled tetraconchs of the Christian East and monuments with a similar ground plan from the Mediterranean and the Latin West. Assuming that Nersēs had no knowledge of these buildings, he sought Zuart'noc' 's origins in the aforementioned Syrian and Mesopotamian prototypes. As Kleinbauer acknowledged, however, this thesis relies on the evidence of surviving monuments; our incomplete knowledge of the archaeology of medieval Asia Minor discourages drawing firm conclusions on the matter. We should not rule out, for instance, the existence of an aisled tetraconch in Constantinople (*ibid.*, n. 52); see below, n. 108. Also interesting, as Piquet-Panayotova pointed out ("Recherches sur les tetraconques," 184), are links to artistic traditions in the Holy Land. The basket capitals of the Zuart'noc' ambulatory resemble those found in Jerusalem (*ibid.*, 207–209, Figs. 20–25). Piquet-Panayotova also suggests that the Anastasis Rotunda may have provided a source for the monument. Although the problems related to the dating of the martyr-cast doubt on this thesis, the idea of connections to Jerusalem is compelling, as Armenian presence and interest in Jerusalem was then quite strong. Equally intriguing are the similarities between the stepped, polygonal platforms at Zuart'noc' and at the later Dome of the Rock. See R. W. Thomson, "Jerusalem and Armenia," in *Papers of the 1983 Oxford Patristic Conference*, ed. E. A. Livingstone (Kalamazoo, 1985), 77–91.
  86. See J. W. Crowfoot, *Churches at Bosra and Samaria-Sebaste* (London, 1937).
  87. J. Kollwitz, "Die Grabungen in Resafa," *Neue deutsche Ausgrabungen im Mittelmeergebiet und im Vorderen Orient* (Berlin, 1959), 45; and W. Wirth, "Der Zentralbau von Resafa und die Probleme seiner Rekonstruktion," *Tortulae: Studien zu altchristlichen und byzantinischen Monumenten*, RQ, XXX, Supplement, ed. W. N. Schumacher (Rome, 1966), 326. See also Grabar, *Martyrium*, I, 189, and E. B. Smith, *The Dome* (Princeton, 1950), 118.
  88. W. A. Campbell and K. Weitzmann, *Antioch-on-the-Orontes*, III. *The Excavations, 1937–1939*, ed. R. Stillwell (Princeton, 1941), 35–54, 135–149, especially 140, Pl. 20, No. 395.
  89. For the excavation reports, see *Apamée de Syrie: Bilan des recherches archéologiques, 1969–1971*, ed. J. and J.-C. Balty (Brussels, 1972).
  90. The dimensions, taken along the north-south axis, are approximately 34 m at Resafa, 36 m at Seleucia-Pieria, 38 m at Bosra, and 38.70 m at Zuart'noc'.

91. Kleinbauer, "The Origins and Function of the Aisled Tetraconch," 109.
92. The patriarchate of Antioch was one of the most important ecclesiastical centers of early Christianity. While the fifth and sixth centuries saw the waning of Antiochene power due to imperial pressure and the rise of Nestorianism and Monophysitism, the patriarchate's jurisdiction nevertheless embraced eleven metropolitan provinces and 127 episcopal dioceses as late as the seventh century.
93. *Ibid.*, 94.
94. M. Lequien, *Oriens christianus*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1740), II, 777; R. Devrèsse, *Le patriarchat d'Antioche* (Paris, 1945), 167–168, 266; and E. Honigman, "The Patriarchate of Antioch," *Traditio*, V (1947), 156.
95. Balty, "L'évêque Paul," Fig. 7.
96. Kleinbauer, "Zvart'nots," 260.
97. See Kollwitz, "Die Grabungen in Resafa," and Wirth, "Der Zentralbau von Resafa." Kleinbauer ("The Origins and Function of the Aisled Tetraconch," 97) suggested that the name "Abraham" inscribed on the church, if it does not refer to a local martyr, may be connected with the bishop of Resafa who attended the second general council of Constantinople in 553: *Abrahamus Sergiopolis metropolitanae civitatis*.
98. *Ibid.* Sebēos affirms the presence of Orthodox foundations in Syria, reporting that the previous catholicos Ēzr traveled there to take communion with the emperor Heraclius (*History*, trans. Thomson, I, 41, 91).
99. Support for an Orthodox reading of the type is provided by the aisled tetraconchs subsequently constructed in the Caucasus. The churches of Bana (ninth/tenth century) and Iṣṣan (ninth and eleventh centuries, with a possible seventh-century phase) were built in the area on the border of Armenia and Georgia, and hence were probably Chalcedonian foundations. The aisled tetraconch of Lekit, which dates between the seventh and eleventh centuries, stands in Caucasian Albania (Aṭuank'), a region, like Georgia, which professed Chalcedonian Christianity.
100. The precise function of the crypt is not known. However, in light of its appearance and size, it probably housed relics; it has been suggested that a ciborium rose above it, although no marks in the surrounding masonry provide evidence of this. The ambo was accessed by a western, rather than eastern, stairway.
101. In early medieval churches of Armenia, the eastern apse is raised one or two steps; in the tenth century and later this section was more elevated.
102. See R. Taft, "Some Notes on the Bema in the East and West Syrian Traditions," *Orientalia christiana periodica*, XXXIV (1968), 326–359.
103. It may also be noted that the mosaic decoration at Zvart'noc', which features the upper part of a cross with diagonal rays emerging from behind its center, corresponds to what we know about the sixth-century decoration of the dome of Hagia Sophia.
104. Mathews, *Early Churches*, 109.
105. *Ibid.*, 57, 60.
106. Paulus Silentarius, *Descriptio ecclesiae sanctae Sophiae et ambonis*, ed. I. Becker (Bonn, 1837), 50, 56.
107. Mathews, *Early Churches*, 109.
108. This raises the question of whether an aisled tetraconch, now lost, once existed in sixth-century Constantinople. Such is the opinion of H. Windfield Hansen, who mentions Zvart'noc' as a possible product of its influence. See "L'hexaconque funéraire de l'area sub divo du cimetière de Prétextat à Rome," *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia*, IV (1969), 93 n. 1.
109. This meeting took place after Gregory returned from Caesarea, where he was ordained bishop. One can imagine that Nersēs would have been attracted to this episode in the story, which highlights Gregory's new status as a legitimate and powerful member of the clergy.
110. Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, trans. R.W. Thomson (Albany, 1976), 275–277. The phrase "heavenly host" was first used in reference to the vision described in Luke 2:13, following upon the announcement of the birth of Christ: "suddenly there was with the angel a heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will towards men.'"
111. It is difficult to compare Xor Virap with Zvart'noc', because the present structure does not predate the thirteenth century and because the chapel lay within an already existing martyrial complex, which was not the case at Zvart'noc'.
112. Yovhannēs Draxanakerc'i, *History of Armenia*, trans. K. Maksoudian (Atlanta, 1987), 102. See Kleinbauer, "Zvart'nots," n. 15, for a discussion of the relics reported by Draṣṣanakerc'i. To my knowledge, Sebēos is the only surviving source to refer to the church as "Zvart'noc'."
113. Ani also features a double-shell plan with columnar exedrae and Ionic capitals. Despite similarities between the two buildings—a fact mentioned already in medieval sources—Gagik's church, like the other later aisled tetraconchs, had no eagle capitals or Greek monograms. For Gagik, ruler of the Bagratid kingdom and resident of its wealthy capital, these features would not have possessed the same significance as they did for Nersēs. For illustrations, see "Ani," *Documenti di architettura Armena*, ed. A. Alpağ-Novello (Milan, 1984), Figs. 22, 23.
114. *Des Stephanos von Taron Armenische Geschichte*, ed. and trans. H. Gelzer and A. Burckhardt (Leipzig, 1907), 214.
115. *The History of the Caucasian Albanians by Movses Daṣṣuranci*, ed. and trans. C. J. F. Dowsett (London, 1961), 207.
116. Gregory the Illuminator lived before the Council of Chalcedon and was venerated by the Greek church as well as the Armenian. He was, however, inextricably associated with Armenian Christianity, and hence a dedication to him may well have been construed as a statement in its support.
117. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Second Oration on Easter*, XLV, 623.
118. "For the emperor Heraclius and his war in Persia upon leaving the capital," II, A. See *Giorgio di Pisidia. Poemi*, I. *Panegirici epici*, ed. A. Pertusi (Etall, 1959), 84. My thanks to Peter Brown for bringing this passage to my attention and to Bissera Pentcheva for the translation.
119. Sebēos tells us that during the time of Heraclius, the Byzantine army camped "on the plain of the city of Vaṭarṣapat [Ējmiacin]," thus locating the troops in the vicinity of the complex of Zvart'noc'.
120. *History*, trans. Thomson, I, 41, 91–92. As Abgaryan has noted, this passage is ambiguous, allowing one to imagine either Ēzr or the Byzantine general as the agent responsible for dispatching soldiers and distributing stores. Nonetheless it is certain that Ēzr had some involvement with the troops. I thank Robert Thomson for discussing this problem with me.
121. *History*, trans. Thomson, I, 40, 88.
122. Zvart'noc' was never to fulfill its duties, and it is not clear who occupied the complex before it fell during an earthquake in the 930s.